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ABSTRACT

As the Suzuki method of music instruction has spread from Japan to other countries, its methods have been modified to adapt to the culture of those countries. In this paper the Japanese cultural background, and the principles and methods developed in Japan are discussed and compared with the adaptations made in the United States. The Suzuki method is grounded in the Japanese mother-child relationship. Japanese culture has traditionally stressed early exposure to the arts, the importance of motivating the child, lengthy practice sessions, the use of role models, encouragement, and the development of a supportive group environment. For the Suzuki method in Japan, this has meant playing recordings of the music and having the child observe classes before participating, teaching the mother before the child, group teaching, and teaching by ear. In the United States motivation is viewed as more individualized, mothers are less involved in children's activities, children are less willing to practice for lengthy sessions, novelty is valued more than repetition, and music instruction has traditionally emphasized individualized instruction and reading musical scores. Because of these differences, the Suzuki method in the United States has moved from its original methods toward methods that accord with American cultural practices. (IS)

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Cultural Continuity in an Educational Institution: A Case Study of the Suzuki Method of Music Instruction

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Talent Education, or the Suzuki Method as it is better known internationally, is an interesting and highly successful method of teaching young children to play musical instruments. Although developed only forty years ago in Japan by Shinichi Suzuki, a Japanese violinist, it now has branches in 23 countries and approximately 300,000 students worldwide. The method's very young students have attracted considerable public notice though their mass performances of difficult works for violin and piano which were previously thought the province of professional musicians and occasional child prodigies. Although the method itself remains a quintessentially Japanese approach to education which embodies deeply rooted Japanese cultural assumptions, its successful implementation in numerous foreign countries demonstrates its widespread appeal and ability to survive transplantation to other cultures. In the process of being adopted by other countries, certain aspects of the method have been modified to fit the indigenous educational attitudes and practices of the recipient cultures. This is particularly evident in the United States, where the method differs in a number of important respects from the way it is practiced in Japan.

This paper will briefly describe the Suzuki Method, and

then consider various aspects in which the method demonstrates particularly striking continuity with traditional and contemporary Japanese educational attitudes and practices. Finally, some observations on how the American Suzuki Method has been readapted to better fit typical American cultural attitudes and practices will be presented.

A consideration of this particular method of musical training is pertinent to this volume's consideration of the role of education in developing human potential from several perspectives. Because the performance ability of students in the method challenges traditional assumptions about the limits of young children's potential to learn sophisticated skills, it is a striking example of the high level of ability which can be achieved in an optimally structured learning environment. Also, the considerable continuity between this newly developed method's beliefs and practices and traditional Japanese cultural attitudes may suggest new avenues of research concerning the manner in which each culture's own educational institutions reflect deeply rooted indigenous attitudes concerning the appropriate nature of teaching and learning. Finally, the manner in which the Suzuki Method as practiced in America has been modified in the direction of greater consonance with American beliefs and practices may serve as an interesting case study for policy makers who are considering transplanting their own culture's

educational institutions to other countries.

Description of the Suzuki Method

Shortly after the end of the Second World War, Shinichi Suzuki, a German-trained Japanese violinist began to teach the violin to children in Matsumoto City according to a new educational concept which he had been gradually developing over the previous ten years. Noticing that all normal children learn to speak their native language easily and fluently by the age of five or six, he concluded that if this teaching method were adapted to other subjects, young children could learn equally effectively. This "mother tongue approach" became the inspiration for the founding of the Talent Education Method in 1946.

Suzuki's mother-tongue approach can be summarized in the following manner (Suzuki, 1974):

1) Structuring the home environment from birth in such a way that the child is in constant contact with the medium to be learned.

2) Beginning instruction with very simple tasks, using imitation and repetition as the basis of the teaching process.

3) Arranging for abundant daily practice.

4) Encouraging the child's interest in the medium to be learned by making it an integral part of positive interaction between the child and the family, especially the mother.

5) Making learning fun by showering praise and affection at each sign of increasing competence, and making lessons and practice sessions challenging and enjoyable.

The Suzuki method implements this mother-tongue approach in its teaching of violin, piano, cello, and flute to students beginning at the age of two years. Ideally, Suzuki recommends that children be exposed daily from birth to many repetitions of a selected number of recordings of great musical works, as well as the instrumental repertoire which they will later learn. More commonly in practice, when a mother decides that her child is ready to begin lessons, usually at around three years of age, the mother and child initially spend a month or two observing other children's lessons and listening at home to recordings of the repertoire.

When the child's interest in the instrument has been aroused, the mother begins lessons a few weeks before the child, and continues her lessons for several months to acquire a basic grounding in the instrument. Once the child's own lessons begin, the mother assumes the role of the child's home teacher, attending all lessons, directing all home practice sessions, and assuming primary responsibility for the child's progress on the instrument.

The first lessons involve only very basic and simple

skills and explicit training in building the child's concentration ability. Each tiny step is repeated for several weeks at a time until the child can perform it easily and accurately many times in a row. Typically, it takes a three-year-old child about a year of hard work to accomplish all the steps necessary to play Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, the first song in the repertoire. After this point however, the child's fundamental playing position, tone, and rhythmical sense have been solidly established, and progress through the repertoire rapidly snowballs in speed. Children continue to study and practice earlier pieces as they advance and on request can perform from memory any piece they have ever learned.

Weekly lessons occur in a small group, and group playing and instruction are interspersed with short individual lessons, with the other children and mothers looking on. Children progress through a set sequence of musical repertoire, learning the material completely by ear from the recordings until they reach an intermediate level.

Mothers are encouraged to maintain the amount of practice time at the upper level of their children's concentration and stamina, and to disguise the hard work in the form of games that they play together, with inculcation of the teaching points as the objective. Beginning with numerous one or two-minute sessions per day, parents

gradually build their child's ability to concentrate for longer periods. Over an hour of practice per day is not uncommon even for four-year olds, and enthusiastic mothers may practice even more. Not surprisingly, progress is rapid and children quickly learn to play difficult professional concert repertoire. Average violin students master Vivaldi Concertos at age seven or eight, and Mozart Concertos at age ten or eleven; faster students perform these works at age five or eight, respectively.

Although the method is better known for its teaching of very young children, many students continue to study within the method through adolescence. As children mature, mothers gradually play a smaller role in home practice sessions and children frequently begin to practice largely on their own after the age of eight or ten. Although some students do go on to enter conservatories and make a career in music, Suzuki avows that the goal of the method is not to produce professional musicians. Rather than emphasizing career training, Suzuki desires to develop sensitivity, fine character, and well-developed general abilities in his students through the study of music.

American interest in the Suzuki Method began during the early 1960's, and by 1965 a few qualified teachers had begun to accept students. Membership in the method rapidly mushroomed, and currently there are approximately 150,000

students in the United States and Canada, out-numbering those in Japan by a factor of four or five. Although most American teachers attempt to model themselves on the method as it is taught in Japan, in a number of respects modifications have been introduced which better fit American cultural beliefs and practices. The following discussion will describe these modifications as well as the ways in which the Suzuki Method as originally conceived in Japan is a product of Japanese educational beliefs and practices. These topics will be considered in regard to the following aspects of the method: early education and tailoring instruction to the very young child, the role of the mother, teaching techniques, theories of talent and ability development, and the ultimate goal of musical training.

Early Education

The Suzuki Method typifies indigenous Japanese folk psychological beliefs in its recommendation that children begin their formal training in the arts well before school age. Although Suzuki's recommendation that children begin formal lessons between the ages of two and three (Suzuki, 1982) anticipates common Japanese custom by a year or two, there is a widespread and very ancient belief that children learn many subjects, particularly music, second languages, and complex physical skills most easily and naturally during

the preschool years.

Fushikaden (ZeAmi, 1972) an ancient specialists' treatise on Noh Drama which has been preserved since the Kamakura Period (1185-1333) recommends that boys destined by birth to succeed their fathers as Noh actors begin their lifelong training in the art of Noh at the age of seven years, by traditional reckoning. By modern means of counting age, the child was actually only five and a half years old on the average, because traditionally, children were counted one year old at birth, and two years old when they celebrated their first New Year. Subtracting an average of a year and a half from traditionally reckoned ages gives average age by modern reckoning. Until the historically recent past, it was considered most auspicious for children to begin training in okeikogoto, or lessons of any type when the child was six years, six months, and six days old by traditional reckoning (approximately five years of age).

In contemporary Japan, the Suzuki Method is only one of several popular musical training methods for preschool children. In addition to nearly universal enrollment in at least two years of parent-financed preschool or day care centers (National Institute for Educational Research of Japan, 1983), during the past 20 years, extra enrichment lessons have also become very common for preschool children. A recently completed pilot survey of the educational

histories of all first-grade children in two Tokyo elementary schools (Taniuchi, unpublished 1983) suggests that a large majority of the 142 children surveyed began attending extracurricular lessons during preschool. In School A, a laboratory school attached to a well-known educational university which draws students from generally well-educated, upper-middle class backgrounds, 99% of the children had taken extracurricular lessons during preschool. In School B, a local elementary school in a middle and working-class neighborhood, 72% of the children had taken extracurricular lessons during preschool. The most popular types of lessons, in order, were swimming, piano, calligraphy, and gymnastics.

When attempting to teach sophisticated skills in a formal lesson situation to preschool children, considerable care is required in structuring and presenting the lesson material in such a way that the child's interest and motivation are maintained. The Suzuki Method has borrowed from a long Japanese tradition of folk teaching psychology in consciously stimulating the student's motivation to the greatest possible extent before allowing lessons to begin. New Suzuki students and their mothers observe the weekly lessons of the beginner's group that they well later join for a month or two, meanwhile listening daily at home to a recording of the first songs in the repertoire. During weekly lessons, the mother and child watch the other children from the back of the room and the teacher and other mothers

combine in telling the new child how much fun it is to learn to play the violin. Mother explains that if the child is very good, he or she may someday be allowed to join in the fun.

Once the child's interest has been aroused, the mother receives from the teacher a tiny violin just the child's size, and the mother begins lessons and daily home practice sessions. The child is required to wait a few weeks longer, watching alone from the back of the room during weekly group lessons, and hearing and seeing the mother practice at home the same exercises that he or she will soon learn. At this point it is a rare child who does not daily beg to be allowed to practice the violin too. When the mother and teacher see that the child's motivation is at a fever pitch, the first lessons begin.

With the ingenious twist of adding the mother as primary role model for the preschool child, the process just described is that of the time-honored minarai kikan, or "period of learning through watching." Such varied contemporary institutions as Zen temples, junior-high-school tennis clubs, and salaried employment typically begin with a more or less rigorous and lengthy period during which the prospective applicant is expected to stand on the sidelines and watch the older members' activities. New applicants must demonstrate the seriousness of their intent to join the group by regular attendance, careful observation of group activity,

and enthusiastic desire to be included. Once the group has judged a prospective applicant to have demonstrated sufficient staying power and seriousness of intent, he or she is invited to join the group and provided with the necessary equipment.

Once lessons begin, Japanese teachers recognize the importance of maintaining the student's initial enthusiasm for the subject by not dampening the beginner's clumsy but wholehearted attempts through excessively harsh correction. Most teachers believe that teaching is ineffective and the child's ability will not develop unless the child enjoys the learning process, and therefore tries hard to learn the material presented. Six hundred years before Rousseau ushered in an era of child-oriented, humanistic educational practices, the author of Fushikaden (ibid, 1972) recommended that teachers approach young students beginning the study of Noh drama in the following way:

> "Allow children to develop their ability naturally by letting them follow their own inclinations freely. Don't excessively point out "this is good" and "that is bad." If children are corrected too excessively, they lose their desire to learn and find Noh tedious and uninteresting. When this happens, their abilities cease to develop." (p.108)

Suzuki (1981) echoes his twelth-century predecessor when he urges mothers and teachers of beginning violin students to remember that:

> "Adults may want to teach numbers or mathematics,

> but a child wants to be petted and have fun playing. Tasks which are done happily are internalized and in this manner talent is grown carefully. The problem is how to combine interest and training. If a child is always scolded, his ability will not grow." (P. 21, 23)

In contrast, Americans seem to have a different folk theory of the nature of motivation and interest. Interests are believed to arise primarily from an individual's personality and natural propensities, rather than being largely developed by the surrounding environment. American parents typically wait for their child to spontaneously evidence an interest in and readiness to undertake music lessons through such behavior as special interest in music-oriented play, or occasional requests for an instrumental toy to play with. Training in the arts, or the choice of a particular type of enrichment lesson is believed to be properly the product of the child's individual choice, rather than the result of a carefully orchestrated parental attempt to arouse the child's interest. Spending several months calculatedly stimulating a small child's desire to play the violin on the basis of a parental decision that the child should take lessons strikes many Americans as overly manipulative. Partly because American parents typically wait for the child to evidence spontaneous interest, children usually begin lessons slightly later, at age four or five.

The Suzuki Method as practiced in America rarely requires a substantial period of observation and daily home

listening before the child is allowed to begin lessons. When a preliminary observation period is required, it is frequently considered more a test of the mother's demonstrated interest in the method than an orchestrated attempt to create strong motivation in the child. A child's simple indication of casual interest and willingness is usually sufficient for lessons to begin, without further delay for artificial inflation of the child's motivation.

Japanese Suzuki teachers believe that without an extremely high level of initial motivation, the child is unlikely to be willing to reliably produce the effort necessary to sustain the difficult process of daily coaxing the fingers and body to learn new and difficult combinations which constitutes violin or piano practice. Because a high level of student effort is seen as indispensible for the teaching process to translate into the development of abilities, the child's level of motivation is not left to the vagaries of individual differences and chance, but consciously maximized before beginning the teaching process. While the American reliance on the child's spontaneous interest may serve perfectly well in undertakings such as music lessons, where a child who does not evidence interest may not be forced to take lessons, such an approach may come aground in situations such as public school where children are required to learn subjects in which they may not be spontaneously interested. In such situations, Japanese folk

psychological notions of gradually introducing the child to the subject in a manner carefully calculated to stimulate motivation may be of considerable use. It is worthy of note that a similar process of gradual introduction to the subject matter, designed to elicit the child's interest and motivation is common in Japanese preschools and first grades (Taniuchi, forthcoming).

The Role of the Mother

The mother's role in assisting her child's learning is central to the teaching process of the Suzuki Method. Indeed, the method could be summarized by saying that the Suzuki method teaches the mother how to teach her own child to play the violin at home. Mothers attend weekly lessons with a notebook and tape recorder and come forward with their child to sit under the teacher's scrutiny during lessons. During the lesson, the teacher explains directly to the mother what should be practiced at home during the week, and demonstrates the process with the student. The lesson ends with the child reciting a promise to practice hard according to the mother's instructions. Mothers are held solely responsible for their child's progress on the instrument, and although children themselves rarely receive less than generous praise and encouragement at weekly lessons, mothers may be quite strictly admonished by the teacher if the child

has not been practicing hard enough.

Suzuki holds parents directly responsible not only for the development of their children's abilities, but for children's personality characteristics as well (1981). Stubborn, disobedient children are said to have acquired their parents' own habits of scolding and intransigence, just as cheerful, obedient children reflect their parents' happiness and agreeability. He therefore encourages parents to continually examine their personalities, honestly admit their own faults and openly strive for self-improvement as an example to their children. This idea that parents (particularly mothers) should constantly work to overcome their own personal weaknesses for the sake of their children has deep cultural roots in Confucian moral teachings for women such as Kaibara Ekken's Onna Daigaku (Great Learning for Women).

However, the idea of mobilizing the mother as a sort of full-time auxiliary private music teacher for the child is probably unique to the Suzuki Method. Traditionally, children who attended abacus, music, or any other type of lessons either did not practice outside of the lesson situation, or usually practiced at their teacher's house (Tsuge, 1983). Furthermore, the pattern of intense maternal involvement in children's educational achievement which is characteristic of contemporary Japanese families (E. Vogel,

1963; S. Vogel, 1978; DeVos, 1973) apparently has emerged only during the past few decades (Norbeck, 1978), as academic success has replaced family affiliation as the chief determiner of a child's occupational future.

Contemporary Japanese middle-class mothers are typically heavily involved in their child's educational activities. Although the Suzuki Method expects more maternal participation than do most extracurricular enrichment lessons, the previously described pilot survey of the educational histories of first-grade children (Taniuchi, 1983) showed that 65% of 1st grade children's extracurricular lessons were either "always" or "frequently" observed by the mother. In addition to after-school lessons, most mothers maintain a busy schedule of school-oriented activities such as frequent PTA meetings, parent visitation days, and the like. At home, the pattern of the Suzuki violin practice session is recapitulated with school assignments through elementary school, as mothers assist with daily homework, monitor assignments, and ensure that the child is prepared for the next school day.

This habit of studying together with the child is established during the preschool years. Japanese mothers informally teach their children many quiet games and activities which develop experience with educational materials such as writing and counting games, drawing,

origami paper folding, and listening to story books. Most children also learn to read and write the basic phonetic alphabet (hiragana) and do simple arithmetic at home. A 1967 survey (Sakamoto, 1975) of five-year old children who were to enter elementary school in five months showed that on the average, children could read 36.8 of the 48 hiragana letters. This average has risen over the past 17 years, and currently most children can read almost all 48 letters by the time they enter first grade. This achievement is largely the result of mothers' assistance at home, as preschools rarely teach these skills.

Although in the United States mothers also assist their children's homework, they rarely do so to such an extent. Many parents may believe that it weakens a child's self-reliance and lessens the value of the child's achievement if parents are too heavily involved in the daily learning process. In contrast to Japanese theories of achievement, which tend to emphasize an interdependent network of cooperative effort and planning (Glazer, 1976), Americans prefer to emphasize individual effort and ability. Because American parents typically make a clearer distinction between a child's hobbies and learning tasks, and those of the parent, the demands of Suzuki music lessons frequently become a heavy burden for American parents. American Suzuki teachers find that only rarely are mothers willing to seriously practice the violin themselves for several months

in preparation to teach it to their child. Observing all lessons and leading daily practice sessions often becomes much more than the mothers bargained for when signing their child up for lessons. One of the questions most frequently asked of teachers by American mothers is "How soon will my child be old enough to practice by him (or her) self?

Teaching Techniques

From the point of view of classical Western violin and piano pedagogy, perhaps the most unique aspects of the Suzuki Method's teaching techniques are the emphasis on group instruction, and the practice of having children initially learn to play by ear. In these respects, the Suzuki Method represents a grafting of traditional Japanese music teaching techniques to the study of a Western instrument. When the Suzuki Method was transplanted to the United States, these Japanized aspects have usually been modified to more closely resemble typical Western methods of music pedagogy.

For example, in Japan, Suzuki violin students usually receive their lessons as a member of an informal group of approximately 10 or 15 children whose lessons overlap each other on a given afternoon. Three or four less advanced students and their mothers arrive shortly before the teacher appears, and prepare their instruments and the lesson room

for the teacher's arrival. Once the teacher arrives, relatively brief (5 to 25 minute) individual lessons are interspersed with group instruction and remarks addressed informally to the entire group. Students carefully observe each others' lessons to pick up points which may be relevant to their own performance. Gradually, more advanced students arrive and begin observation and participation in the group activities. Earlier students linger once their lessons have finished to observe later students' lessons, usually spending most of the afternoon in the lesson studio. Scheduling is vague and flexible, and the length of an individual lesson may vary greatly depending on the child's attention span and the weekly assignment. The atmosphere is relaxed and friendly and lessons may be broken off while the teacher chats with the students over tea and cookies. Suzuki teachers believe that this type of group learning is more enjoyable and effective than exclusively private lessons because students have a chance to associate with and learn by modeling for other students, and to pick up hints for their own playing by watching the teacher work with other children.

This type of group lesson scheduling closely resembles that described by Malm (1959) as typical of traditional Japanese music lessons at the turn of the century. Even contemporary extracurricular lessons for children in traditional subjects such as abacus and calligraphy typically follow this scheduling pattern. In America, however, this

type of group lesson is notoriously difficult to institute because many parents believe that private instruction in which the teacher's undivided attention is focused on only one child is more effective than either group activities or observation of other children's lessons. The tuition fee is seen as obligating the teacher to spend a fixed amount of time with a student each week, rather than being similar to a membership fee which allows the child to participate in group activities and to receive as much individual attention as the teacher deems his or her attention span and rate of progress requires. American teachers therefore experience pressure to schedule an individual half hour lesson for each child with the option of observing other children's lessons or participating in separately scheduled group rehearsal sessions. This relieves American parents of the frustration of "waiting around" while other students have their lessons but also deprives the children of the chance for observational learning and fostering of relationships with other students.

From the point of view of classical Western music pedagogy, perhaps the most controversial aspect of the Suzuki Method is that the children initially learn to play by ear from listening to records which they hear daily at home. Typically, Suzuki-trained children do not learn to read music until they are at least seven or eight years old and studying on an intermediate level. Even after an advanced student

becomes able to read music easily and well, musical scores are not used during the lesson, and the teacher hears only that part of a piece which the student has learned from memory. The decision to postpone teaching children how to read music until they are seven or eight is understandable in view of practical difficulties of trying to explain to a preschool child why there are eight sixteenth notes in a half note. However, Suzuki holds that the main reason for this practice is to avoid focusing students' attention on the process of transcribing written symbols into sound and encourage their attention to musicality and tone production. He insists that because music is an aural medium, the performer should also experience it primarily aurally rather than visually (Suzuki, 1983).

It is significant, however, that traditional Japanese classical music was also primarily an oral tradition in which students learned to play by ear. Although an incomplete and rudimentary notation existed for traditional instruments, musical scores were typically preserved as privileged objects and only the most advanced students instructed in their use. Beginners learned pieces by imitating their teacher passage by passage, and through such additional teaching cues as singing and clapping. (Malm, 1959) This is typical of the teaching and learning of traditional instruments in many other cultures, as well as Western jazz and folk music (Trimillos, 1983).

For the past several centuries, however, Western classical music has been passed on in written form, and taught and learned primarily through decoding musical scores. Such habits die hard, and currently in the United States, the Suzuki Method's postponement of teaching note reading and emphasis on learning by ear is one of the aspects which draws the most serious fire from the method's critics. It also causes considerable uneasiness among American Suzuki teachers themselves, and many teachers try to develop or borrow methods of teaching note reading to shore up what many consider a major weakness of the method. To address this problem, the American Suzuki Journal features a regular column on teaching note reading, which is not included in the Japanese monthly journal.

Suzuki has ingeniously adapted this traditional method of teaching by ear to the widespread modern availability of inexpensive record players and cassette tape recorders. Students can listen at home to the pieces they are studying until they learn them by heart. In addition, through constant exposure they also absorb the musicality and interpretation of the models. For this reason, even advanced students who read music easily are encouraged to listen daily to professional recordings of the works they are studying. Suzuki likens this process of absorption of musical sensitivity to the process of acquisition of the lilt and

subtle intonation of one's native dialect (1982).

Many American observers however, feel uncomfortable about the degree to which Suzuki students are encouraged to listen to and imitate recorded models. In the Western artistic tradition, "creativity" or the ability to develop a uniquely individual rendition of even very well-known works is one of the most important goals of the creative process. Conscious imitation of even artistically superior models is believed to be inimical to the development of such creativity. Perhaps for these reasons, American parents rarely play the recordings as frequently as recommended, and American teachers rarely encourage students past the beginning stages to use the recorded models as daily examples for direct imitation.

Japanese teachers however, do not consider imitation in such a negative light. They believe that in the effort to approximate an ideal model, students will gain the superior qualities of a great performer, rather than lose that which is distinctive about themselves. Imitation of a superior model has traditionally been the core of the teaching-learning process in almost every Japanese art form or discipline (Malm, 1959; Gutzwiller, 1974). "Creative" or merely different interpretations are not valued solely for their distinctive quality if they lack a concomitant excellence of artistic taste and high level of technical

skill. Students are believed to gain such technical control through tireless attempts to approximate a worthy model, and to develop taste by becoming so imbued with the style of an excellent performer that it becomes their second nature. The Japanese approach does not altogether eschew creativity, but rather considers it more appropriate to the final stage of the learning process when the advanced student has acquired an exquisite control and understanding of the medium and therefore has the skills to produced significantly important new interpretation rather than merely an idiosyncratic performance.

Theories of Talent and Ability Development

The Suzuki Method holds that all normal children can develop the ability to give a fine violin or piano performance of concert-level repertoire provided they have a conducive home environment, proper training, and practice well. Suzuki's belief that musical talent is the result of education rather than heredity is reflected in his choice of the name "Saino Kyoiku," or "Talent Education" Method. He is unshakably optimistic that just as all children learn to speak their native language fluently and confidently, any child can develop comparable musical abilities if proper effort is expended in molding the environment and providing daily practice. For example (Suzuki, 1981):

> I am asked, 'Is there no superior or inferior ability?' I did not say, 'All chhldren are the same.' There is no mistake in the genetical rule that there are no two people alike on earth. I am only saying that, 'Inborn greatness or mediocrity is not known.' When looking at a newborn baby, absolutely nobody can say, 'This child will be a talented musician,' or, 'This child will be a talented literary person.' Every healthy child in Japan has the ability to speak excellent Japanese by the age of six or seven. I ask all mothers, 'Does your child speak well?' If the answer is 'Yes,' then I say, 'If so, then that is the evidence that your child can develop excellent abilities with a good education. Have confidence.(p. 1-2)

As a Japanese, Suzuki is not unique in his belief that abilities are primarily determined by environment and training rather than heredity. A large-scale Japanese government-sponsored survey questioned 4,500 parents from a broad range of social classes in three different prefectures concerning various beliefs and attitudes related to intelligence (Miura, Nagano, Watanabe, 1976). Overall, 80% of respondents indicated that they believed that intelligence is primarily determined by experience and education after birth, rather than heredity.

Cummings (1980) reports the prevalence of similar attitudes among teachers in his recent study of Japanese elementary schools. He notes the total absence of ability grouping of children within the classroom and remarks:

Japanese teachers are, comparatively speaking, well

> qualified and experienced, and are confident in the learning potential of all students. They are not impressed by the scientific evidence that suggests school achievement is genetically determined. Instead, they believe anyone can learn if he tries and is appropriately guided. (p. 159)

Beginning in junior high school, many Japanese children experience increasing pressure to pass entrance examinations for prestigious high schools and universities. (E. Vogel, 1962) In the popular imagination, gaining admission to a top university is the result of almost superhuman diligence and effort rather than inborn ability. Such popular sayings as "pass with four (hours of sleep per night), fail with five" attest more to belief in the crucial role of hard work and perseverance than the actual sleeping schedule of successful applicants. Despite evidence of strong correlations between social class, financial background, early school achievement, and acceptance at elite universities (Cummings, 1980; Rohlen, 1983) the public continues to believe that any given child's chances of success are largely a matter of daily study until late in the evening with special tutors and attendance at after-school cram schools.

This Japanese belief in the necessity of great persistence and large quantities of hard work for the development of abilities has been noted by numerous writers, particularly Morsbach (1983) who describes the high esteem with which persistence is regarded by the Japanese. Continued effort in the face of a nearly impossible task is

an indication of singleness of purpose and great strength of character and is glorified in many traditional and contemporary stories and sayings. In any type of study or learning situation, it is commonly accepted that the more valuable the skill to be learned, the harder it will be to acquire. Years of intensive self-discipline and training are expected to be necessary to acquire any really important ability.

Suzuki (1969) echoes this attitude when he writes:

> Ability does not just come by nature without training. We have to educate it in ourselves. Stop lamenting lack of talent and develop talent instead. (p. 52) Practicing according to the correct method and practicing as much as possible is the way to acquire ability. If one is faithful to the principle, superior skill develops without fail. Those who fail to practice sufficiently fail to acquire ability. Only the effort that is actually expended will bear results. There is no short cut. (p. 109)

Repetition is central to this activity of diligent, persistent practice. Although the word in English connotes doing the same thing again and again in the same way, when a Suzuki teacher tells a student to repeat a particular passage 100 or 1,000 times, they expect that each time the student will strive to play it better than the last. Repetition is continued long past the point at which reasonable competence is reached, until correct performance becomes automatic. This is the process termed "overlearning" in Western

educational psychology. Suzuki students for this reason continue to review and study every piece in the repertoire, on a comprehensive review schedule. Even advanced students are never considered to "outgrow" the most elementary pieces, and Suzuki frequently reteaches how to play open strings and Twinkle Twinkle to students playing on a professional level. He asserts that ability is more effectivly developed through time spent in repetition and perfection of previously learned material than through learning new material.

The theory of learning embodied in this teaching tradition is beautifully summarized by Herrigel (1953) who describes the link that Japanese teachers perceive between repetition and ultimately creative performance:

> Far from wishing to waken the artist in the pupil prematurely, the teacher considers it his first task to make him a skilled artisan with sovereign control of his craft. The pupil follows out his intention with untiring industry. As though he had no higher aspirations he bows under his burden with a kind of obtuse devotion, only to discover in the course of years that forms which he perfectly masters no longer oppress but liberate. He grows daily more capable of following any inspiration without technical effort, and also of letting inspiration come to him through meticulous observation. The hand that guides the brush has already caught and executed what floated before the mind at the same momemnt as the mind began to form it, and in the end the pupil no longer knows which of the two -- mind or hand -- was responsible for the work. (p. 60)

In contrast, Americans prefer to de-emphasize the sheer volume of diligent daily practice which is necessary to

develop competence in virtually any field. Textbooks for the popular market carry such titles as "Learn German in Sixty Days", or "Ballroom Dancing in Ten Easy Lessons." Folk beliefs and popular stories usually describe superior abilities in already developed forms, or the progress of students who possess natural genius rather than focusing on accounts of average people who achieve prominence through years of determined hard work and perseverance. In learning situations, teachers and parents usually refrain from encouraging children to exert intense sustained effort in the absence of natural talent or affinity for a subject, preferring to scale the goal to their estimation of the child's abilities. Morsbach (1983) observes that American culture typically stereotypes those who spend years of intense self-discipline in pursuit of faraway goals as possessing rigid, compulsive personalities, rather than as examples to be admired and emulated.

The American Suzuki Method also tends to de-emphasize repetition and sheer volume of practice. Parents and teachers of preschool and lower-elementary-school-age students frequently believe that encouraging large amounts of practice (Suzuki recommends 1 1/2 to 2 hours per day for this age group) is not necessarily good for a child. Rather than building character through training in diligence and persistence, Americans feel that so much practice by such a young child may somehow be vaguely harmful. Perhaps for this

reason, young American Suzuki students tend to practice less than they do in Japan.

Furthermore, the American cultural attitude that repetition is usually boring, whereas learning new material is fun means that Suzuki students and parents become oriented toward rate of progress through the material rather than quality of performance. Students are less willing to continue to practice and study earlier material, and teachers meet resistance from both parents and students in spending lesson time in continued study of "easy" songs. American Suzuki teachers are also less likely to prescribe their Japanese counterparts' favorite prescription for difficult passages "Practice it 1,000 times this week and then see if it still seems hard." Daily repetition of the records for home listening also suffers, with American parents being less willing to play the same record 5 or 6 times every day.

The Goal of Musical Training

Although most Talent Education students develop surprising proficiency at very young ages, Suzuki asserts that the primary goal of the method is not to train children to become professional musicians, but rather to cultivate the qualities of sensitivity, service to others, and nobility of character in its students. The following quotation gives a

sense of Suzuki's attitudes on the subject (Suzuki, 1969):

> The mother of one of my students came one day to inquire about her son. This student had good musical sense, practiced very well, and was a superior child. 'Sensei (Profesor) will my boy amount to something?' When the mother asked me like that, I answered laughingly. 'No. He will not become 'something.' It seems to be the tendency in modern times for parents tc entertain thoughts of this kind. It is an undisguisedly cold and calculating educational attitude. The mother was alarmed and surprised at my answer. So I continued, 'He will become a noble person through his playing. Isn't that good enough? You should stop wanting your child to become a professional, just a good earner. This thought is concealed in your question and is offensive. A person with a fine and pure heart will find happiness. The only worry for parents should be to bring up their children as noble human beings. That is sufficient. Your son plays the violin very well. We must try to make him splendid in mind and heart also.' (p. 25)

This emphasis on the spiritual rather than utilitarian goals of artistic training is common in traditional Japanese arts such as archery (Herrigel, 1953), chadō (tea ceremony), kendō (Japanese fencing), and shodō (calligraphy). The suffix dō is written with a Chinese character meaning way or path, and when used in this sense connotes a spiritual discipline. Suzuki shares this view of the goal of studying music and in his early writings (1946) coined the term "ongakudō" or "Way of Music" to describe the properly spiritual nature of musical training.

These traditional arts were historically the province of the Japanese upper classes and have assimilated many

characteristics of Zen Buddhism and Bushidō, the ethical code for samurai warriors. Because the arts were primarily pursued for the purpose of spiritual discipline, they were usually practiced in private settings, and making a living by their public performance for money was viewed as inimical to the spirit of the art. A distinction arose between kurōto, or "professionals" such as impoverished teachers and geisha who made their living from performance or teaching, and shireto or "gentleman amateurs" who pursued it for other higher purposes (Tsuge, 1983). In modern Japanese, the meaning of these words has shifted to emphasize relative level of skill, and the original connotation of opprobrium in the term kureto has been reversed. Shireto now carries a slightly negative nuance and suggests a low level of mastery and understanding of an art, closely approaching the English "amateur."

Suzuki preserves somtething of the original attitudes toward the shireto and kureto distinction in his above advice to a mother and in his typical self introduction as "an amateur violinist who is president of an international organization for training amateur musicians" (Suzuki, 1983). Not being professionally oriented, the method enjoys something of a renegade status in the Japanese musical scene because it is not linked to professional conservatories and music universities. Due to the Japanese tendency to maintain strict divisions between adherents of different artistic

schools, Suzuki students who wish to pursue a musical career within the Japanese professional system must usually leave the method in their early teens to study with a teacher affiliated with a mainstream conservatory or music university.

Rather than mere professionalism or technical expertise, Suzuki's goal is to raise noble human beings who are splendid in mind and heart through the discipline of musical training. He frequently asserts "to attain high art and musical sense, a pure mind is indispensable" (1969, p. 44). He directly links style and characteristics of violin playing to personality attributes, and attempts to change students' personal weak points through prescribing certain techniques of violin practice. In pursuing such training, he concentrates intensively on the more subtle aspects of violin technique, such as tone quality, musical sensitivity, and intonation. For example, a student who lacks the ability to carry out her intentions self confidently may find herself required to spend months practicing how to produce a clean attack on an open note repeating a single note 10,000 times each week. A student with an egotistic and self-aggrandizing playing style may find himself the object of Suzuki's frequent teasing and be used as a model in public teaching demonstrations focusing on his weakest points until he learns to be more humble.

Although in his own teaching Suzuki actively attempts to develop student's character through musical training, in practice few other Suzuki teachers even in Japan pursue this goal so purposefully. Most teachers continue to espouse Suzuki's attitude that the primary goal of the method is to develop fine character in their students, but pursue this through less radical methods, such as encouraging respect for the teacher and other students, using polite language and greetings, and maintaining a cheerful and positive lesson environment.

Suzuki frequently writes poems and inspirational sayings for distribution to students and presentation at graduation ceremonies which reflect the direct relationship he perceives between a musician's character and the quality of performance, and the almost mystical connection between the quality of a player's tone and the quality of their heart.

> "A string has no heart, it sings only with the soul of the player." (Gen ni ha kokoro nashi, narasu mono no kokoro wo utau nomi.)
>
> "Tone has a living soul without form" (Oto ni kokoro ari, sugata naku ikite).

Contemporary students of traditional Japanese instruments such as the shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute) attest to a similar linking of the study of an instrument and spiritual discipline (Gutzwiller, 1974). Learning the instrument is a process of lifelong study of a few basic

works of great antiquity which are studied and restudied at gradually deeper levels. The goal is personal and spiritual maturity, and mere musical pleasantry or technical brilliance in the absence of a concomitant spiritual understanding is devalued as empty mechanical wizardry. The quest to produce pure tone or "the true sound of the bamboo," assumes a function similar to that of a Zen koan (a riddle-question whose solution accompanies enlightenment) in itself. The goal is ichi on je butsu, the attainment of enlightenment through perfecting a single note.

The path to achieving this enlightenment through the study of a particular skill requires patient practice of the medium until its component techniques can be performed effortlessly and infallibly, without the benefit of conscious thought. This requires countless repetitions of fundamental techniques concentrating on achieving control of their minutist aspects (Morsbach, 1983): As described above, Suzuki frequently requests such practice from his students, prescribing, for example, 10,000 repetitions of an open tone, concentrating on improving the beauty of the after echo. The goal is for students to transcend the need for their conscious mind to monitor their efforts to achieve a high quality performance, at which time the medium can be practiced as a spiritual exercise in a selfless meditative state of transcendent calm and detachment. The discipline of practicing to attain such a level of performance as well as

the insights gained in the transcendent state are believed to positively affect all other aspects of daily life.

Herrigel (1953) beautifully chronicles this learning process in his description of six years spent as a student of a master in the art of Japanese archery. Four years of intensive daily training were necessary before Herrigel could draw the bow and lose the shot with the required unconscious detachment, effortless strength, and infallible timing. The object of this arduous training was the psychological and spiritual attitude of Herrigel himself, and only after this point had been reached was he allowed to turn his attention to where the shots landed. The goal of the years of patient practice is to become able to abandon the controlling self and to allow perfectly trained ability to function in a state of spiritual transcendence.

Such overtly spiritual goals are quite foreign to American training in the arts. Learning to play an instrument is undertaken either for enjoyment or the utilitarian purpose of pursuing a career. In its transplantation to the United States, the Suzuki Method has so completely lost its original spiritual aspects and character-molding techniques that few American teachers or parents are even aware of their existence. The method focuses on the concrete task of teaching children to play an instrument and rarely espouses higher goals for molding

character than helping children learn to enjoy music and providing a warm, supportive lesson environment. This is in consonance with the typically pragmatic American approach to education, and disinterest in spiritual and quasi-mystical quests for self improvement through long practice and discipline.

The goals of the American Suzuki Method are also not inimical to the pursuit of a musical career. Indeed, in the eyes of many observers, the number of students who go on to pursue careers in music is in some way a measure of the method's success or failure. Many Americans perceive something wasteful in a child who plays concert repertoire at the age of 10 yet does not go on to become a career musician but plays only for personal enjoyment or satisfaction. Also in contrast to Japan, U.S. teachers and students in the Suzuki Method are not isolated from mainstream musical careers and several conservatories and university music departments sponsor programs in the method.

The Suzuki Method in Perspective

Besides those similarities enumerated in this paper, there are other aspects in which the Suzuki Method resembles traditional Japanese educational traditions. For example, the relationship between Suzuki and his adult students

resembles in some aspects the traditional master-disciple relationship, and the method's organizational structure shares many characteristics of the traditional iemoto system of fictive kinship. However, every educational institution shares aspects of continuity with its cultural roots, and the evidence of cultural continuities presented in this paper is not meant to suggest that there is nothing new about the Suzuki Method.

Particularly in the blending of traditional and contemporary practices, there is much that is innovative. For example, the idea of using modern cassette tape recorders in the home to improve upon the time-honored oral tradition of teaching by ear greatly increases student exposure to the music they must learn. Suzuki's idea of recruiting and training the contemporary educationally oriented mother as an auxiliary home music teacher also very effectively ensures that preschool children will practice in a regular and efficient manner.

Furthermore, this paper's description of changes which the method has undergone in its transplantation to the United States is not meant to suggest that the American version of the method is incorrect or inappropriate within the American setting. This judgmental view is particularly common among both Japanese and American participants in the Suzuki Method, who tend to discount the legitimacy of culturally different

educational attitudes and practices in favor of a unidimensional value system in which the original Japanese method is "good" and the aspects in which the American version differs are "bad" or "wrong." Perhaps, by understanding how these changes reflect deeply rooted American cultural beliefs and practices we may understand them not as mistakes or perversities, but as arising from different conceptions of the nature of the process of teaching and learning which contributes to the strength and vitality of other American educational institutions and practices. In a different context, for example, the American penchant for utilitarian rather than character-building goals of training and emphasis on non-repetitive short-cut learning procedures may allow for a broader dissemination of practical skills and a greater willingness to attempt to learn things oneself without relying on a teacher's authority.

However, a teaching method as complex as the Suzuki Method functions as a carefully-balanced inter-related whole, and by changing some aspects of the method, one subtly changes the internal dynamics of the system and achieves a different end product. One example of how this has occurred in the adaptation of the Suzuki Method to American cultural values is the effect of different beliefs about the appropriate role of the mother in the child's learning. Because American mothers are in general less willing or able to be extensively involved for several hours a day in their

children's music practice, they spend little time practicing the violin themselves, play the practice tapes less often, and find it difficult to supervise lengthy practice sessions. This means that American children either practice less or must accept more responsibility for their own music lessons at earlier ages, and this pays off in less efficient and careful practice which in turn affects the average level of American students' performance.

Rather than stubbornly attempting to urge the ultimately unsuccessful process of changing American mothers' conception of their own role so that it becomes more Japanese, successful practicioners must modify and readjust the method to compensate for highly resistant cultural beliefs and practices. By attempting to modify culturally discrepant demands and introducing new techniques which serve a similar teaching function, the method can adapt itself to the new culture without seriously decreasing its effectiveness. It is important that in this process, the method does not only borrow congenial aspects and ignore others, as this can create serious imbalance and inefficiency in the overall system. For example, American reluctance to encourage students to learn primarily through imitation of models and impatience with large amounts of repetition means that many parents do not daily play and replay the practice recordings at home. This makes it difficult for children to learn new material and to thoroughly memorize that which they have

learned. In compensation, many American Suzuki teachers have found it necessary to develop methods of teaching music reading to young students so that they can efficiently learn new pieces.

Perhaps this paper's description of the Suzuki Method can provide some ideas for those practicioners who contemplate transporting educational institutions across cultures. Ideally, in the process, both cultures can learn from each other and combine their own strengths with new ideas developed in different traditions. In the case of the Suzuki Method, a basically traditional Japanese method of music instruction has been adapted to local beliefs and customs in numerous countries throughout the world. In the process, it has demonstrated not only that very young children can learn a highly complex skill such as playing the violin, but also that they can learn to experience the joy of making music. This in itself is perhaps the most significant contribution of the method.

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